

Bladen County Natural Area Inventory

HORSESHOE LAKE (SUGGS MILL POND) AND MARSHY BAY Significant Natural Heritage Area

Site significance: national

Size: 12,378 acres: 6593 acres within primary boundary (5603 in Bladen County), 5785 acres within secondary boundary (all in Bladen County).

Quadrangles: Ammon, Jerome

Ownership: State of North Carolina, private

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES: Horseshoe Lake (Suggs Mill Pond) and Marshy Bay natural area contains one of the largest remaining examples of an intact Carolina bay complex within the global range of this land form. Among the site's notable features are several exemplary examples of natural community types, seven rare plant species, and five rare animal species. High quality natural communities include Coastal Plain Semipermanent Impoundment, Low Pocosin, High Pocosin, and Xeric Sandhill Scrub. Among the rare plants are Federal Species of Concern Venus flytrap (*Dionaea muscipula*) and awned meadow-beauty (*Rhexia aristosa*); awned meadow-beauty is also State Threatened. Rare animals are Federally and State Threatened American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), and State rare anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*), ornate chorus frog (*Pseudacris ornata*), Hessel's hairstreak (*Callophrys hesseli*), and decorated spur-throat grasshopper (*Melanoplus decorus*).

LANDSCAPE RELATIONSHIPS: This natural area is located in northern Bladen County and southern Cumberland County south of Bushy Lake, east of Little Singletary Lake, north of Gum Springs Road, and west of Old Fayetteville Road. It extends southeastward from Big Gallberry Bay on the Cumberland/Bladen county line to NC 242 in Bladen County. The site includes Suggs Mill Pond Game Land, and is located near the northern end of the Bladen Lakes Macrosite, which extends from southern Cumberland County through eastern Bladen County into southwestern Pender County. To the northwest, the bay complex is part of the headwaters of Indian Creek, a tributary of Harrison Creek, while to the southeast waters outflow into Ellis Creek; all are tributaries of the Cape Fear River. A high quality landscape connection extends northward to Bushy Lake State Natural Area, and westward to Little Singletary Lake natural area, benefitting the movement of several groups of animals. The natural area is directly connected by disturbed but naturally regenerating habitat northwestward to Jessups Pond and White Pond Bay natural area. The connection southeastward to Charlie Long Mill Pond/Big Colly Bay natural area and eastward to Mill Pond Bay Natural Area is interrupted by paved roads, crop land, and rural residences. Within the natural area, the primary boundary includes habitat in good natural condition and/or with other exceptional biological values, while the secondary boundary includes habitat of lesser natural value, but which buffers primary habitat and/or have good restoration potential.

SITE DESCRIPTION: Horseshoe Lake (Suggs Mill Pond) and Marshy Bay natural area is an extensive complex of large Carolina bays, bay rims, and intervening upland and wetland flats. The largest bay basin contains an impoundment (Horseshoe Lake, also known as Suggs Mill Pond) that supports the Coastal Plain Semipermanent Impoundment community. A smaller bay